

GOD'S PUPIL, GOD'S PREACHER—AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY NO. 2318

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 23, 1893
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 28, 1889**

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."
Psalm 71:17

YOU notice how much David is at home with God. He talks about Him. He does better, he talks to Him. He hears God speaking to him and he keeps up a dialog with God. Whence came this holy familiarity? It sprang from long acquaintance. David as a boy had known God. He knew Him when he was old and grey-headed, and you know, old friends use language to one another which would not be tolerated in occasional acquaintances.

There are certain things which they who have long known the Lord, and who abide in Him, may say to God and of God, which might not be said by others. It might even verge on blasphemy if others were to say the same things. When you read books like Rutherford's Letters, or Madame Guyon's Sonnets, or George Herbert's Poems, you must not think that everybody may speak so. These were the Johns and the Marys, the favorites of heaven—they had dwelt so long with the King that He permitted to them, nay, He fostered in them, things that would be impertinences in strangers, and might not even be seemly to beginners in the things of God.

Oh, may you and I live long enough and well enough to be on very intimate terms with God! May we walk with Him till, one of these days, we walk away with Him, and they say of us, "He was not, for God took him"!

David here tells us, nay, he tells God rather than us, that he had been *God's pupil* all his life, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth," and then he says that he had been *God's pupil-teacher*, "and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." When we have listened to David on these two points, the preacher will venture, with some hesitancy, but still under a sort of compulsion, to use the words himself, and say, "O God, thou hast taught *me* from my youth: and hitherto have *I* declared thy wondrous works."

The preacher using the psalmist's language in the hope that many here will make bold to come into the same lot and take a share in the same heritage, that many here, especially many young people may say in after days, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

I. First, then, let us think of DAVID AS A PUPIL.

God was his Teacher, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth."

This shows that David had a teachable spirit and if you had asked him where it came from, he would have said that *God gave him a teachable spirit*. God is not only the Teacher of our spirit, but he gives us a teachable spirit. Have we all received that precious gift?

The "genius of the age" is against a teachable spirit. You would suppose now, to hear some men preach, that Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and make critics of every creature, and they shall be saved thereby." But that is not the Gospel. I do not so much blame the age for its errors, as for the fundamental error of not being willing to be taught. Men have cast off authority and wherein authority in religious things is not of God, it is well cast off, but I fear that in casting off the evil, many have gone far towards casting off even divine authority.

No, you are not to think what you like. You are not to believe as you please. No man may control you, but God has never given liberty to your thought or to your understanding to be free from His government. What He reveals, you are to accept—to take it as infallibly true, to bow the knee of your intellect before it, to believe that, "He teacheth to profit" and to expect the fulfillment of the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD."

A teachable spirit, although it is despised by many, is a happy spirit. It is a growing spirit. It is a restful spirit. It is a heavenly spirit and whoever has it must ascribe the possession of it to the Spirit of God, who leads us into all truth and makes us willing to be led therein. Oh, that we may have such a spirit, that we shall count it an honor to say, "O God, thou hast taught me"!

Some would count that as a dishonor. They would say, "O God, even You canst not teach us. There is more in our honest doubt than in all the faith You can give us," which, being interpreted, is a lie. No, dear brethren, let us seek and covet earnestly a teachable spirit, that, like David, we may be taught of God.

In David's acknowledgment, we learn that *God took him very early into His school*. "Thou hast taught me from my youth." What a mercy it is to begin to know God before we begin to know anything else! The first words of the Bible are very significant, "In the beginning, God." The first words of this Book should be the first words of every life-book, "In the beginning, God."

Happy shall you be if your first intelligible thoughts shall be of your Maker, your Benefactor, your Friend. Happy shall you be, for, as you shall grow in understanding, you shall also grow in acquaintance with your God, and every ripening faculty shall be sanctified as it opens, so that your first morning shall have no dew but the dew of holiness and of divine life resting upon it.

Where was David taught in his youth? I suppose in the pastures of Palestine. When he was keeping his father's flock, he sat down, he thought, he meditated, he prayed. Beneath the stars that looked down on him like so many eyes of divine love, he sat at night and spoke with God, and God talked with him. And among the sheep he learned to sing, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

There he learned of God so well that when a lion and a bear came against his flock, and took away a lamb, he fell upon the monstrous beasts and in the strength of God, tore them asunder—and he remembered to ascribe the glory of his deeds to God and to praise His holy name. He spent his school-days well. He passed the highest standards and he carried the certificates in the skin of the lion and the paw of the bear. Oh, blessed is the young man, who is taught of God as to be equal to the duties of his station and able to find God is his strength in carrying them out!

David's words also mean that *God kept him in His school as a youth*. Generally, boys go to Sunday school till they begin to feel themselves young men. You half insulted one just now when you called him a lad. He is "a young man" and his companion is not a girl, she is "a young woman." She could not go with girls now that she is a young woman. And these young people think they are too big for the Sunday school. And very often this is the point where the church of God loses touch with them. It was not so with David. He could say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth."

He kept on being taught as he grew up to be a young man. He still walked with God and so well did he use his early lessons that, going to the army to meet his brothers, he saw the giant Goliath defying the armies of the living God and he came forward and said to Saul, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." And he puts in practice, as a young man, the lessons of his boyish days. Glorifying God, he slings his stone and lays the giant low.

How well did God teach him, by his many struggles, educating his faith, and increasing his graces! When he was at the court of Saul, he continued as a young man still to learn by the songs of those who said, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," and by the sneers of envious courtiers, ay, and even by the javelin of the jealous king, he kept on learning and being taught of God, so that he behaved himself in a simple way in the sight of Israel, being instructed of the Most High.

When he became a man, even when he became a king, *he still continued to be taught of God*. With a crown on his head, he was still a scholar and disciple of the great God. Swaying a scepter, he was still

nothing but a child before a father when he thought of God. It is beautiful to notice, in David's life, how often he says, "Bring hither the ephod." He would know the will of God. He would listen to Nathan the prophet—he would inquire of the Lord's servants that he might learn more of God.

David, as a man, was taught of God in his trials, in his crosses, in his comforts, by his friends, and by his enemies. He was always being taught of God. Sometimes, alas! he forgot his lesson, or he blotted his book—but he never left the school. He was chastened, but he was never cast out—he still continued as God's pupil.

We find him, as a grey-headed man, still penning his Psalms and being taught of God—perhaps in his last days learning most, learning most sorrowfully, staining his book with tears, discovering more of himself and more of the mercy of God, more of the power of temptation and more of the power of the sacrifice that puts away sin, more of the wanderings of his heart and more of that free Spirit who upholds us, and makes us walk in the ways of God. He was always being educated. A Christian man has never finished his education till he stands before the golden throne of God.

There are many aged men who can say with David, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." They find themselves learners yet, for they are "unstable, weak, and apt to slide." O young people, you who are just beginning life, I do pray that you will begin learning soon enough to be able to say afterwards, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth"!

There are some here who can never say that. Whatever becomes of them, however much God may bless them, they can never say it, for they have reached the middle of life, and they have not gone to school to the great Teacher. Well, if you cannot say all that you could wish to say, may the Lord take you into His school now, though you are a ten o'clock scholar, and yet teach you, so that you shall learn enough music to sing among the angels to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made you to be accepted in the Beloved!

Surely, dear friends, we are so foolish that we need to be taught, and we cannot have a better Teacher than the omniscient God. Let us, therefore, pray tonight, that if we are at God's school, we may keep there. And that if we are not there, we may go there at once. May all our names be put down in the roll of scholars of the College of Christ, the university of grace, this very night, and God shall have the praise!

II. But now I want you, for a minute or two, to notice DAVID AS A PUPIL-TEACHER.

While he was a pupil, he was also teaching. He says, "Hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

Observe, then, that *David taught people what he saw*. He saw God's works all around him. Ah! me, that is a great sight. God is at work everywhere and there are none so blind as those who will not see His works. But the mass of men do not see God. You see the working of machinery, you see the working of the laws of nature, you see the working of the laws of supply and demand, but many of you cannot see the working of God. May the Lord open your eyes, poor blind bats, for if there is anything that stares in the face of the man who is willing to see it, it is God, and God at work in providence, in nature, in grace, and in all sorts of ways!

I read of one, the other day, of whom somebody said that when he stayed at his house, he noticed that he talked as if he saw God always before him—and truly that is how every Christian should talk, for we should see God always before us. David said, "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." We do not see God as we should and we shall never teach aright for God, until we have a kind of instinctive feeling of the presence of God, till we are conscious that God is in us, and round about us, and at work for us.

God's work that David saw was very much work in himself, and work for himself, and work in other men's hearts. Being taken into the school of God, he was made to observe things—he had object lessons put before him and he learned to read God's work. And *as he saw it, he wondered*. "Hitherto," said he, "have I declared thy wondrous works." He who is a stranger to wonder is a stranger to God, for God is wonderful every way, everywhere, and everyhow. It is all wonders when you get near to God and see

what God does. And you know, no man teaches a thing so well as when he is struck with it himself. When it astonishes him, he will then tell it to others with gusto and with emphasis. So David made a fine pupil-teacher, because, seeing God's work, he wondered at it and spoke of it as a wondrous thing.

We find that *David took opportunity to declare God's wondrous work*, sometimes with his pen, writing his Psalms. Sometimes with his voice, singing those Psalms. Sometimes talking to a few, sometimes speaking to many. Now, dear friends, what I want you all to do is, if you have seen God's work and have been struck with it, you should declare it, tell it to others. I know that some of you, at any rate, love God and fear Him, but you never speak about Him. Ah! me, have you a dumb devil or are you possessed with a dumb spirit? The Lord cast it out of you!

There is no way of learning so good as that of teaching. A young man, who was going to Cambridge, said, I think it was to Archbishop Whateley, that he was going to get a "coach," that is, a tutor, to coach him through his studies. "Do not do that," said the other, "Take a pupil—you will learn better that way." And I believe that it is so. To teach is a wonderful way of learning, that I know that by experience. To read hard all day and then, in the evening, to go and preach what you have read, will stamp it indelibly upon your memory and lead you to a better knowledge of it than any other method that a philosopher could suggest.

Therefore, first learn of God and then teach to somebody else what you have learnt. You will keep it that way, you will never lose it. If you keep on only learning, and learning, and learning, and learning—your hoarding it up will breed mildew and I know not what besides. But if you learn it and then teach it, that will keep it sweet and you will never forget it. This is David's pupil-teachership—he is being taught of God and he is teaching others.

And David had this felicity, that he could say, "Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." That is, he kept on teaching and *he kept on teaching the same thing*. What must the ministries of some of our ministers be like? The first five years are spent in teaching evangelical doctrine. The next five years are spent in pulling that all to pieces. The next five years are spent in teaching some new philosophy—no, not five years—they are not so long as that over any one thing. I mean, the first five months are spent in teaching some new philosophy, then a month in pulling that to pieces, another month in making a new theory, and another month in pulling that to pieces.

Oh, what kind of a life must it be? "I never saw," said poor Richard, "an oft-removed tree, nor yet an oft-removed family, that thrived." Surely an oft-removed doctrine, when a man is perpetually shifting the soil around it, can never thrive or do much good. Here the great-hearted veteran says, "Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." All this he ascribed to God—he gave God the glory of his learning and of his teaching also. May you and I do the same! So far about David.

III. Now for a few words about myself for the honor and glory of God. I could not help saying something tonight about what Hugh Miller calls, "MY SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS."

"O God, thou hast taught *me* from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

I went down, last week, to Maidstone in Kent. It is as near as possible to the day, forty years ago, when I left the school called a "College" there. I thought that I must go down and look at the spot and specially at a tree which stands by the river Medway. Under that tree I spent many hours and many days, and even many weeks, reading all day long. "In school-time?" say you. Yes, my master thought that I should do better under that tree than in the classroom, and he was a wise man. He gave me my books and left me to myself.

And as I stood, last week, under that tree, with the smoothly-flowing river at my feet, I could thank God for His mercy to me for all these forty years and I could say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." There may be some young people here tonight, just come back from school. Some young people who are just finishing their school days. I would to God that they would spend some time in holy, quiet thought about their future, about whom

they will serve, who shall be their Teacher, for whom they will become teachers, and how the life which has now become more public than before shall be spent.

As I stood there, last week, I could not help praising God that, not long after I left that school, He led me to faith in Christ, and to rest in Him, and find eternal life—and I could not but thank God that I went to that school for twelve months. It was a Church of England school. I had never seen anything of Church of Englandism till that time, but there was a turning in my life, through being there, to which I owe my being here.

The church of England catechism has in it, as some of you may remember, this question, “What is required of persons to be baptized?” And the answer I was taught to give and did give, was, “Repentance, whereby they forsake sin, and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.” I looked that answer up in the Bible and I found it to be strictly correct as far as repentance and faith are concerned, and of course, when I afterwards became a Christian, I also became a Baptist—and here I am—and it is due to the Church of England catechism that I am a Baptist.

Having been brought up among Congregationalists, I had never looked at the matter in my life. I had thought myself to have been baptized as an infant and so, when I was confronted with the question, “What is required of persons to be baptized?” and I found that repentance and faith were required, I said to myself, “Then I have not been baptized. That infant sprinkling of mine was a mistake. And please God that I ever have repentance and faith, I will be properly baptized.”

I did not know that there was one other person in the world who held the same opinion, for so little do Baptists make any show, or so little did they do so then, that I did not know of their existence. So I feel grateful to the Church school and grateful to the Church catechism, for what I learnt at Maidstone. I do not know that I have any vivid gratitude for any other question in the catechism, but I am very thankful for that particular one, for it led me where it was never intended to lead me by those who wrote it. It led me, however, as I believe, to follow the Scriptural teaching that repentance and faith are required before there can be any true baptism.

Well now, what shall be your schools and schoolmasters? Dear young people, I long that each of you may be able to say, “O Lord, thou hast taught me from my youth.” You must, first of all, be taught by *the Holy Spirit*. He is willing and able to come into your mind and to influence it in a very extraordinary but very effectual way. He can teach your reason, reason, and cause your understanding to understand aright. He can take away from you the bent of prejudice, He can remove from you the depraving influence of sin, and He can give you to understand those things which are essential to your peace and eternal salvation. Seek the Spirit of God, then, to begin with.

Then your next school will be the *inspired Word of God*. Believe in this Bible from the first word of Genesis to the last line of Revelation. It will never mislead you. It has never misled anybody. It will tell you the truth as to your conduct, as to your condition before God, as to what you are to believe, and what you are to do. If you search well the Scriptures, if the law of God instructs you, and if the Gospel of God teaches you, then God will be teaching you, for this is the school-book of the family of love, and they who will accept it, and believe it, shall be taught of the Spirit of God who indited it.

Have not all of us, who are in the school of Christ, learnt much, in the next place, from *the means of grace*? “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.” I have to bear my willing witness to the benefit received in the congregation of God’s people. “What!” say you, “Why, you do not hear any sermons!” No, I hear very few except my own and they are not the best. But preaching them is probably of more service to me than hearing them is to you, for there is a care of the Word of God that is necessary and the searching of it in the preparation of the sermon, and the waiting upon God for help in the service—all these have been to me a means of grace.

Paul so regarded it when he said, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” He found that it was a means of grace to him to be permitted to preach. Certainly, you young people must take care that you do not neglect the public services of God’s House. They will teach you from your youth.

Another method of teaching is that of *observation of others*. If we would be taught of God, we must keep our eyes open to see how He deals with others. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright." Watch the hypocrite. Keep your eye on the prosperous sinner. If you do, you will soon find God teaching you wondrous things.

You will also be taught by *conversing with the people of God*. Young Christian, get much with old Christians—I do not mean with all of them—some of them will not help you much. But I mean those who live near to God and are real and genuine saints. Get to speak with them. Tell them your difficulties and ask them how they have got through the same trials. Compare the footsteps of the flock with your own footsteps. Many an old child of God will be a precious mine of instruction to you.

The first lessons I ever had in theology were from an old cook in the school where I was an usher. She was a good old soul and used to read *The Gospel Standard*. She liked something very sweet indeed—good strong Calvinistic doctrine—but she lived strongly as well as fed strongly. Many a time we have gone over the covenant of grace together and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness meant. And I do believe that I learned more from her than I would have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays.

There are some Christian people who taste, and see, and enjoy religion in their own souls, and who get at a deeper knowledge of it than books can ever give them, though they should search all their days. Get with such people of God, the experienced people, the tried people, and you will be able to say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth."

Another schoolmaster is *self-examination*. A very sour, crabbed schoolmaster is this one. Very few like him, especially if you take a lesson every night before you go to sleep and look through the actions of the day. It is not a very pleasant exercise—there are so many faults to find, so many mistakes made, so many good things omitted. But if you cannot have self-examination every day, at any rate have it sometimes. You will learn better by your mistakes than if you had never made a blunder. Sometimes even a grave fault may save you from ten grave faults, if it is well observed and avoided in the future, and God teaches you thereby.

You learn nothing by self-examination unless the Lord is your Master, but if He is with you, then your acquaintance with yourself will help you to an acquaintance with Him. There are two prayers always worth praying, "Lord, show me myself" and "Lord, show me Yourself." May both be heard and you will be well taught of God!

But there is a schoolhouse to which I have gone and to which I expect to go again. I cannot commend it to you for its pleasant situation, or for the beauty of its architecture. It is called the schoolhouse of *sore affliction*. Whoever does not go to that school, every minister whom God blesses to the salvation of souls will have to go there. It is an absolute necessity of a true shepherd of God's tried people that he should be tried.

There may be exceptions, but I do not think that there are, and dear friends, you, each one of you, if you are to be taught of God, will have to be afflicted. There are some truths that are never learned, I suppose they may be learned, but they never are, except in the dark. Today, in the middle of the day, we could not see the stars. But if we had gone down a well, we might have seen them. And often the dark hole of affliction reveals stars of promise and glittering truths, which else we never could have seen.

I will appeal to my experienced brothers and sisters here. Have you not learned more in trial than anywhere else? Do you not owe more to the hammer, the file, the anvil, and the forge than to all the comforts that you ever received? Here it is that God really fashions us. Till He gets us into the fire and the hammer begins to ring upon us, there seems to be no shaping us after the method of divine working.

And dear friends, once more I come to a place on which I stood in the middle of the sermon. God has taught me, and He has taught many of us, by *setting us to work to bless others*. If any Christians cannot learn quickly, let them get to work for Christ and they will soon learn. "Oh!" says one, "I am so full of doubts and fears." Get to work for the Lord. "Oh!" says another, "I never have much joy and peace." Get to work for the Lord.

Another cries, “I am afraid that I am not saved. I am often afraid that I am not and yet I do believe in Jesus Christ.” Tell somebody else about Jesus Christ. Do not think so much about yourself. That dog-hole of selfishness can never afford you any comfort. While the first and last concern of a man is simply his own feelings, or his own enjoyment, he cannot get any good feelings, or any enjoyment either.

Recollect what the farmer does down in the country on a cold winter’s day. There stand the boys, with chill blisters on their hands and they want to get near the fire. They cry out, “Oh, father, it is so cold!” He says, “You go and do a bit of plowing, Johnny. You go and do a little hedging and ditching, William.” And they come in with rosy cheeks and they say, “The weather is beautiful. It is quite bracing and we are all in a glow.” And yet it may be that the thermometer has gone down while they have been out, but they have been warmed by their work.

I wish I could turn some Christian people out of their pews and get them at this time of night out into the lodging-houses, or in some corner preaching, or going to some sick persons in the hospital to read and pray with them. You may depend upon it, being taught of God is best done, all other things being equal, when, with a teachable mind towards God, we have a teaching mind towards others.

When you will to bless your fellow man, you shall get a blessing. “The LORD turned the captivity of Job when he prayed”—for himself? No, I have purposely made a mistake there. It is not so, just look it up, “The LORD turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his”—well, it says, “friends,” but you know, they were a curious kind of friends. Job called them, “miserable comforters,” and so they had been. But when he took to praying for them, then the Lord turned his captivity.

Begin to pray for your disagreeable neighbors. Begin to pray for your unconverted friends and the Lord will turn your own captivity while you are doing that. By blessing others, you shall be blessed yourself. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 77

This Psalm is headed, “To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun.” He was one of the great singers. There is opportunity given in the Psalms for each of the singers to take his turn. It does not do for any of us to be idle in reference to the praise of God. It is called, “A Psalm of Asaph.” His Psalms have usually a dark tinge about them. He was a meditative man, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” but also a man of strong faith and of an exulting spirit. You need to do business in great waters to understand Asaph—he is one who does not wade, but he gets into “waters to swim in.” Thus he begins—

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.*

The use of the voice in prayer is not essential, but usually, when men grow earnest, they use the voice as well as the mind. It was because of the intensity of his prayer that the psalmist felt compelled to cry, not to use stilted, stately language, but the natural cry of pain. “I cried unto God with my voice.” You will find it very helpful in private prayer to use the voice—many of us do. Some have not the opportunity of doing so, but if you can be unheard of men and can use your voice, you will find it helpful. Twice says the psalmist, “I cried unto God with my voice.”

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:*

This is the best place to go in the day of your trouble.

2. *My sore ran in the night,—*

A better rendering would be, “My hand was stretched out in the night.” The psalmist continued to pray.

2. *And ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.*

Rightly so, if the comfort came from man, if the comfort were doubtful and ineffectual. Wrongly so, when right comfort was presented to him, comfort from God. I am afraid that in the time of our trouble, we often increase it by being unwilling to be comforted.

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled:*

What! Trouble even from remembering God? Then this is trouble indeed. And yet this has been the experience of the saints of God many a time. “I remembered God”—His holiness, His justice, my offenses against Him—“and was troubled.”

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.*

Turned over, overwhelmed. Without comfort, or hope of comfort.

3. *Selah.*

Screw up the harp strings—they have gone flat through such hard striking. These deep notes have put the strings out of order. The man in his grief cannot sing well and he had need to say, “Selah.” *Sursum corda.* Lift up the heart. Prepare yourself again for song.

4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*

Yet he was speaking. But it did not seem to him like speaking. It was rather an inarticulate wail than the language of a man.

5. *I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*

A little holy history is good reading for a heavy heart. You will often stumble on a record of God’s providential dealings, or a paragraph concerning His wonderful love, that will cheer your heart. Yet it did not cheer the heart of the psalmist just then.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night:*

“How I used to sing like the nightingale, with the thorn at my breast. I call that to remembrance.” But we cannot always sing old songs. Old experiences may have but little fire in their ashes, though often in their ashes live their wonted fires.

6. *I commune with mine own heart:*

A very proper thing to do, but not much comfort generally comes of it. It is like stirring water that is already muddy—the more you stir it, the more muddy it becomes.

6. *And my spirit made diligent search.*

When a man can deal with himself like this, his trouble will not last long. God save me from a dumb sorrow, sorrow that cannot think, and cannot judge, and cannot weigh itself!

Now listen to the psalmist’s questions. Does doubt question your faith? Then let faith question your doubts. Here is a catechism for a desponding heart. I commend it to you who are in trouble. Put your soul through its paces—ask these questions.

7. *Will the Lord cast off forever?*

Has He ever done so? He may seem to cast off for a little while, but “Will the Lord cast off forever?”

7. *And will he be favorable no more?*

It is a long lane that has no turning. The Lord may take down the rod, but will He always use it? Will He always chide?

8. *Is his mercy clean gone for ever?*

If His favor is gone, yet is His *mercy* gone? Does not the Psalm say, “His mercy endureth for ever”? If I cannot claim favor as a saint, may I not hope for mercy as a sinner? “Is his mercy clean gone for ever?”

8. *Doth his promise fail for evermore?*

Oh, what a question that is! God’s promise may tarry, but it never fails, and if it seems to fail for the time being, will it fail forevermore?

9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*

What hot shots these are for unbelief! I warrant you that, however deep your unbelief may be tonight, if, by earnest prayer, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you ply it with these questions, it will have to yield.

9. *Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.*

Can it be so? Was it ever so to any of God's people? Now comes "Selah" again. Turn those screws once more. Put the harp strings right again. We shall have sweeter music from this time.

10. *And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.*

"But I will remember," is added by the translator. Surely it was to the psalmist an infirmity to be thus in trouble. He called it Benoni, son of sorrow, but it was not infirmity to God. He called it Benjamin, son of the right hand. There is a sort of parallel between Asaph and the woman who named her child Benoni. Certainly it is a great infirmity—it is a sin—to doubt God, and to be cast down and troubled.

11. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.*

Think of what God has done for His people, how He has delivered them, how He has lifted them from the dunghill and set them among the princes, even among the princes of His people. Think of His wonders of grace and be no more discouraged.

12. *I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.*

Those who talk ought to meditate, otherwise they grind wind. Those who meditate will talk, otherwise the miller grinds only for himself.

13. *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary:*

Or, "in holiness." God's way is always a holy way, a righteous way.

13. *Who is so great a God as our God?*

When we think of the greatness of God, if we simply dwell upon His power, we make a mistake. The greatness of God lies mainly in His moral attributes, in His completeness, His wholeness, His holiness.

14-15. *Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.*

"Selah," again. In looking back, the psalmist has remembered the history of the whole nation. He thinks of what God did for His ancient people. Indeed, he is on the verge of a great song. Well may he tune the strings again. He has in thought gone back to the Red Sea. He is standing like Miriam, by the waters that devoured the foes of Israel, and he must sing as she did. In a high poetic strain he writes—

16. *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.*

At the very sight of God the sea began to flee, to lay bare its depths. "The floods stood upright as an heap," in their fear and dread of the presence of God, "and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea."

17. *The clouds poured out water:*

The floods above answered the floods below and came to the help of the Lord, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

17-18. *The skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.*

There was a great storm. Thunder and lightning gathered about the sea. When God spoke, the waters rolled back and swallowed up all the warriors of Egypt. Heaven and earth joined in battle against God's foes—not only did the sea flee, but there appears to have also been an earthquake.

19. *Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.*

Not foreknown. Who could have foretold that God would lead His people through the sea? His footsteps are not now to be found. God's ways we cannot guess and even when we have seen them, we cannot understand them. Child of God, does the sea roll before you tonight? Are you in extreme distress? Are you crying as the psalmist did? With your voice do you cry unto God? Then expect deliverance from Him.

20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

Moses and Aaron did not lead them—God led His people, "like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Here the Psalm breaks off with great abruptness. Had it been a human composition, it would have been rounded off with great discretion, but God knows best where to stop. I sometimes wish brethren would do the same in their prayers—they need not keep on till they have worn us out—they may break off short if they like. So may we in our sermons. Perhaps they would be better remembered if the second half was never spoken.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—215, 697, 692

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.